



Small Town Networks

Safeguarding the future for the residents of small communities in the Northern Periphery has never been more difficult or necessary to achieve if we are to retain a sustainable population base, productive economy and sound environmental management. The Small Town Networks' approach to this challenge is practical and rooted in the belief that energising and empowering local community and business interests is fundamental to creating lasting change for the common good. The project seeks to encourage the regeneration of networks of towns using a 'hands-on approach'. It focuses on the need for bottom-up planning, with each town seeking to advance through the work of voluntary groups drawn from the local business and community sectors. Progress in participating towns can be benchmarked from their differing starting positions on three broad dimensions. Shared project officers will facilitate and service the local volunteer groups. Circumstances of market and public failure also create scope for the development of community enterprise or 'third sector' businesses which the project intends to explore.

Objectives

The project aims to support progress in participating towns by benchmarking their starting positions on three broad dimensions. In each case it looks to encourage greater confidence and local ownership of the future, and to chart each community's achievements as it progresses. A cycle, or more properly, a spiral of improvement is the objective with each town at different starting points and seeking improvement at its own pace.

Project activities

Small Towns Network aims to resource the process of change by the appointment of shared project officers to facilitate and service the local volunteer groups. It will also establish a 'community chest' of seed finance which the local Initiatives can draw on to kick-start modest priority projects of a social, economic or environmental nature.

Expected results

The above principles form a positive platform for practical community regeneration work, which is viewed as central to the future of the Northern Periphery as a vibrant and successful part of Europe. Small Town Networks aims to provide a shared agenda for regional agencies and local groups, and requires active citizen involvement because this underpins the formation of 'social capital' and then nurtures it to reinforce a strong sense of community. A confident community can then invoke self-help, set its own goals, prioritise its own needs and mobilise its own resources. It can draw inspiration and help from its neighbours and the wider network. It can influence business, draw upon that sector's commercial acumen, and where necessary (in circumstances of 'market failure') set up community enterprises.



Partners

Västerbotten Association of Local Authorities - Sweden
Business and Regional Development Centre of East Iceland - Iceland
Regional Council of North Karelia - Finland
Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise - Scotland
Ross and Cromarty Enterprise - Scotland
Inverness and Nairn Enterprise - Scotland
Town of Saarijärvi - Finland
Town of Viitasaari - Finland
Town of Jämsä - Finland

Project website

<http://www.smalltownsnetwork.com>

Measure

3.2

Total Budget

1 260 800

NPP Award

630 400

Project Period

01/08/2002 – 30/04/2005

Countries Involved

Scotland, Sweden, Iceland,
Finland

Lead Partner

Organisation

The Highland Council
+44 1463 702260

Project leader

Mike Greaves
mike.greaves@highland.gov.uk